GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS
(DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL & TRAINING)

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1406
(TO BE ANSWERED ON 28.07.2022)

THIRD-PARTY AUDIT UNDER RTI ACT, 2005

1406 # DR. ASHOK BAJPAI:

Will the **PRIME MINISTER** be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the web-based disclosure on websites of the public authorities is generally incomplete and non-compliant with Section 4 of the RTI Act, 2005;
(b) the details of the policy of Government regarding third-party audit of disclosure of information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005;
(c) the number of public authorities which could not get their third-party audit of information conducted during the years 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021; and
(d) the efforts made by Government for ensuring effective implementation of the provisions of the RTI Act, 2005?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (DR. JITENDRA SINGH)

(a) to (c): It is the obligation and responsibility of the Public Authorities to undertake the suo motu disclosure as mandated under Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act, 2005.

In terms of Section 4(2) of the RTI Act, it shall be a constant endeavour of every public authority to take steps to provide as much information suo motu to the public at regular intervals through various means of communications, including internet, so that the public have minimum resort to the use of this Act to obtain information.

With a view to ensure implementation of the provisions of Section 4 of the RTI Act, 2005, initial guidelines were issued vide O.M. No. 1/6/2011-IR dated 15.04.2013 and were subsequently amended in 2016 and 2019 when the guidelines were consolidated and stated in a comprehensive manner. These guidelines, inter-alia, provide for third party audit of proactive disclosure by Public Authority. Central Information Commission (CIC) has also prepared a software for transparency audit to facilitate the Public Authorities (PAs) to conduct third party audit.

Ensuring the implementation of the provisions of the RTI Act and compliance of directions issued by the GoI thereon from time to time in letter and spirit is also the obligation of such Public Authorities (PA).

The status of the action taken in pursuance of the said guidelines is as following: -

S.No	Period	Action taken
1.	2017-18	To assess the availability/quality of disclosures made by Public Authorities, the CIC entrusted Indian Law Institute (ILI) to carry out a sample audit of Public Authorities. ILI conducted Audit of 1159 Public Authorities (PAs) out of 2079 PAs and the outcome was shared with the PAs.
2.	2018-19	The sample audit of 838 PAs out of 2145 PAs was conducted by a Committee comprising of a former Chief Information Commissioner and a former Information Commissioner and the outcome was shared with the PAs.
3.	2019-20	A total of 715 PAs out of 2193 PAs got their suo motu disclosure audited by third Party and the outcome was shared with the PAs.
4.	2020-21	A total of 754 PAs out of 2275 PAs got their suo motu disclosure audited by third Party and the outcome was shared with the PAs.

(d): For effective implementation of the RTI Act, 2005, the Government has taken several steps, inter-alia as follows:-

(i) RTI online portal (https://rtionline.gov.in) has been launched in August, 2013 by the Department of Personnel and Training. Number of Public Authorities aligned to the portal has increased from 96 in 2013-14 to 2492 in 2022-23 (as on 26.07.2022) making it convenient for citizen to file RTI requests and first appeals online.

(ii) Approximately 16,000 Officials, staffs and end users at various Central Government offices were trained in RTI Online Portal by conducting trainings sessions since August 2013.

(iii) Online Payment modes (Internet Banking, credit/debit/Rupay cards, UPI) are now included via SBI payment gateway.

(iv) Capacity building through training of Central Public Information Officers (CPIOs)/Public Information Officers (PIOs) and issue of guidelines for PIOs and First Appellate Authorities (FAAs), so as to enable them to supply information/dispose off first appeal effectively, resulting into less number of 'First Appeal' and 'Second Appeal' to the Information Commission.

(v) Funds are provided to various State Governments for establishing helpline in order to facilitate obtaining of the information by the RTI applicants.

(vi) Funds are provided each year to various state Administrative Training Institutes(ATIs) to help generate awareness about RTI among the citizens of the country through measures like Distance learning programmes and Online certificate course in regional languages, publishing of handbooks on RTI and distribution of the same among the public.

(vii) State Information Commissions (SICs) are provided funds for celebration of RTI week.

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